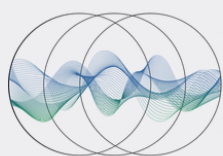
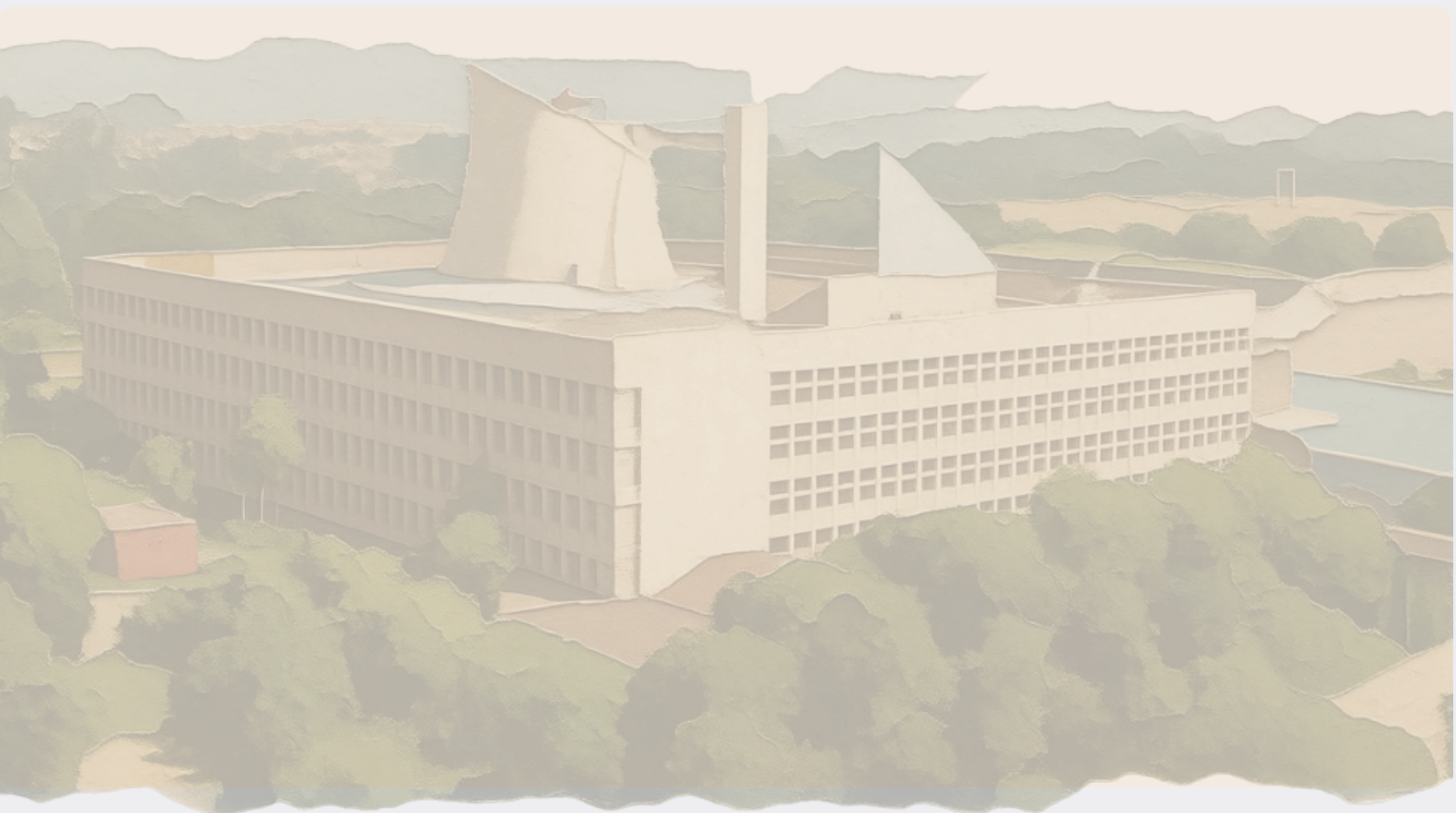


DATA STORY

Inside the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha

June 2026



PANJ

*Policy Advisory and
Network for Joint Progress*

ATTRIBUTION

PANJ Foundation, *Inside the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha*, June 2026; DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.20697444](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20697444)

DISCLAIMER

The study is intended solely to contribute to informed public understanding of legislative functioning, procedural trends, and institutional development in the state of Punjab. It does not seek to question or diminish the authority, dignity, privileges, or internal autonomy of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha or any of its members. All thematic classifications, analytical observations, and interpretations contained in this publication are those of the authors and are intended exclusively for academic and policy discussion purposes. Categories used for analytical purposes in this study are indicative and should not be interpreted as formal procedural classifications of the House unless expressly stated in official records. The analysis is based on publicly accessible proceedings and institutional records available up to May 2026. Comparative references to other state legislatures are intended solely to provide institutional context and do not constitute normative rankings or evaluative assessments.

Any serious attempt to understand the Punjab Vidhan Sabha’s functioning must move beyond conventional indicators of legislative performance. More often the success of legislatures is analysed on the basis of ‘*participation*’ and ‘*process*’. The functioning of a legislature must be judged against the nature and quality of debate. Scholars have argued that what matters is not the volume of legislative business dispatched, but whether exchanges are evidence-based, reasoned, and oriented toward long-term institutional diagnosis. The central question for good legislatures is, therefore, not whether *enough issues are raised*, but how they are *articulated, debated, and deliberated* upon. This piece presents data-based institutional study examining procedural trends and legislative activity in the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha across its sessions between 2022 and 2026 drawing on publicly available Assembly records and bulletins published on the National eVidhan Application.

RULES OF PROCEDURE AND SITTING PATTERNS

A baseline review of the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha’s performance against its Rules of Procedure provides an insight into the relationship between procedural norms and legislative practice. First, according to Rule 14(A) the Vidhan Sabha must meet for at least 40 days across the three sessions (budget, monsoon, and winter) in a financial year. The 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha recorded a total of 63 sittings across four years. A glance at table 1 suggests that several state legislatures constituted in 2022, fell short of fulfilling the non-binding mandated number of days as laid out in their respective rules of procedure. At the same time, the Punjab Assembly distinguished itself for the number of special sessions it convened—*nearly a dozen*, including the session commemorating the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji held in Anandpur Sahib in November 2025, as well as sessions on the occasions of Vaisakhi and Labour Day in 2026. The growing use of thematic and commemorative sittings illustrates the expanding symbolic and communicative role increasingly assumed by state legislatures beyond routine legislative business.

Table 1: Number of Sitting Days Across Selected State Legislatures Constituted in 2022

	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	Total sittings
Punjab	21	14	9	18	62
Goa	21	24	23	28	96
Uttarakhand	6	10	10	3	29
Uttar Pradesh	27	17	18	18	80
Gujarat	26	23	28	3	80
Himachal Pradesh	19	24	30	20	93
Manipur	26	8	9	10	53

Notes:

1. Inaugural March 2022 sessions are clubbed in FY 2022-23
2. Budget sessions for subsequent financial years are accounted for in the preceding financial year.

ANALYSING THE USE OF LEGISLATURE INSTRUMENTS

Key legislative instruments including starred, unstarred questions as part of the question hour and zero hour constitute the operational core of legislative oversight and democratic responsiveness. Their utilisation often provides a rich evidence base into thematic priorities, the balance between constituency-level and institutional concerns, and the broader deliberative culture of a legislature. Between 2022–2026, the 16th Vidhan Sabha conducted twelve formally distinct sessions. The total number of documented sittings in the List of Business dataset extends to 268 line items across sessions, though the number of discrete sitting days was smaller (average 12 days in a financial year). A total of 61 bills were introduced during this time out of which 25 were introduced in just one session, *the Budget Session 2025-26*.

Table 2: Key Procedural Instruments in a Legislative Assembly

Starred Questions (which require oral answers)

Unstarred Questions (which require written answers)

Calling Attention Notices (for drawing a Minister’s attention to a matter of urgent public importance)

Adjournment Motions (for drawing the House’s attention to a matter of urgent public importance)

Official Resolutions (Those presented by the treasury benches and subsequently adopted by the House)

Short Duration Discussions (for discussing urgent matters without formal notice, resolutions, or voting)

Zero Hour Proceedings (allows members to raise issues without the mandatory 15-day notice period)

Private Member Bills

The Zero Hour proceedings were not scheduled or undertaken during eight sittings (out of 22 sittings) covered within the reviewed dataset. During sittings in which the Zero Hour commenced, 98 matters were discussed. Of this, issues related to *roads and infrastructure* was the most discussed, having a mention approximately 18 times. *Drug menace* was the second most discussed topic with concerns on drug trafficking, de-addiction centres, NDPS Act enforcement, cross-border supply, and operations by Punjab Police.

In terms of starred and unstarred questions, *public works* was the most raised issue—in line with the Zero Hour trends. This included concerns relating to construction of bridges and connecting roads. The other top areas included concerns related to *health services* and *local government*. A majority of the issues raised reflected ‘*constituency-level*’ concerns, while others addressed broader ‘*macro-institutional*’ matters.

The 16th Vidhan Sabha recorded 52 Calling Attention Notices during the review period. Of this, 20 pertained to *social issues* like non-implementation of reservation policy, spreading awareness regarding the spread of

dengue, and the need to provide special pension schemes. 11 notices were raised regarding *environmental issues*, one of the most pertinent issues being of stray dogs. Other issues related to overflow of sewages and the damage of crops across different districts. 15 *economic issues* were raised including the non-payment of compensation to farmers, non-availability of agricultural inputs, and food adulteration. Another six issues pertained to governance and administrative matters. The distribution of legislative interventions indicates that constituency-linked concerns continued to form an important part of Assembly proceedings.

COMMITTEE SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONAL OVERSIGHT

The Vidhan Sabha committees form a crucial lever in the functioning of the legislature. The committees are a crucial platform for providing legislative scrutiny into an act of the assembly, also provides a check on the executive, and most importantly, provide a continuity in governance review and consensus. Committee proceedings often allow relatively specialised and less adversarial examination of public policy issues compared to plenary debates, thereby strengthening the deliberative capacity of legislatures.

The Committee on Estimates is a financial committee appointed to scrutinise the budget estimates, ensuring efficiency, economy, and administrative reform in government expenditure. In the 16th Vidhan Sabha, the Committee on Estimates reviewed the budgetary allocations to various departments including Labour Department, Revenue and Rehabilitation, and Forest and Wildlife Protection Department. The Committee on Public Accounts scrutinises government expenditure and CAG audit reports. During the 16th Vidhan Sabha, the Committee submitted reports for the accounts of financial years from 2015-16 to 2020-21. The Committee on Government Assurances is a crucial pillar of ensuring a system of checks and balances. The committee scrutinises the assurances, promises, or undertakings made by Ministers on the assembly floor. In its report it also mentions to the assembly on the status of the fulfilment of such promises. In the 16th Vidhan Sabha, the committee submitted its report three times, each time during successive budget sessions beginning FY 2024-25.

RESOLUTIONS, MOTIONS, AND INSTITUTIONAL POSITIONING

A legislative assembly also passes motions in the form of '*resolutions*' to highlight an important issue and also show wide support for the same. During the review period, a total of 33 resolutions were passed. Of these, 14 were official resolutions, indicating that they were moved by the government. Eight of the 14 official resolutions addressed issues involving Centre-State relations and matters affecting Punjab's economic and administrative interests, including the recognition of Chandigarh as the sole capital of Punjab, demanding release of *Rural Development Fee*, rejection of the *Draft National Framework on Agricultural Marketing*, and a condemnation of the Government of India for an insufficient *relief package* to Punjab during 2025 floods.

A more recent resolution adopted during the Labour Day Special Session on 01 May 2026 expressed support for the government’s decision to increase minimum wages by 15 percent, representing the first such revision in more than a decade. Nine ‘non-official’ resolutions introduced by members were also adopted during the review period. Of these nine, five came from one MLA, Dr. Sukhwinder Kumar Sukhi, who raised issues pertaining to tree plantations, preventing drug abuse, and fulfilment of election promises by elected parties. Further, the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha witnessed the introduction of one no-confidence motion. This took place in its very first year. However, the government survived the motion with the support of over 91 MLAs. More recently, the government raised a confidence motion which came during the Labour Day special session on 01 May 2026. Of the 94 MLAs of the ruling party, 88 who were present voted in favour of the motion.

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Censure motions, which refer to motions passed specifically to disapprove of government policies or actions of individual members, were also adopted by the Assembly. These included censure motions against the Central Government’s India–US Trade Agreement negotiations. Moreover, motions were also passed against the Delhi Government’s decision to remove photographs of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Shaheed Bhagat Singh from government offices, along with censure motions against the Central government over the shortage of cooking gas.

NATURE OF BILLS AND LEGISLATIVE TRENDS

Across sessions from March 2022 to December 2025, the 16th Assembly introduced and passed 61 bills. Of this, 60 bills sustained a 100 percent same-day passage rate. This trend is in line with the 15th Vidhan Sabha which also saw a 100 percent passage rate for 117 bills. The one unpassed bill was Punjab Prevention of Offences against Holy Scriptures Bill, 2025, which was referred to a select committee. Separately, the

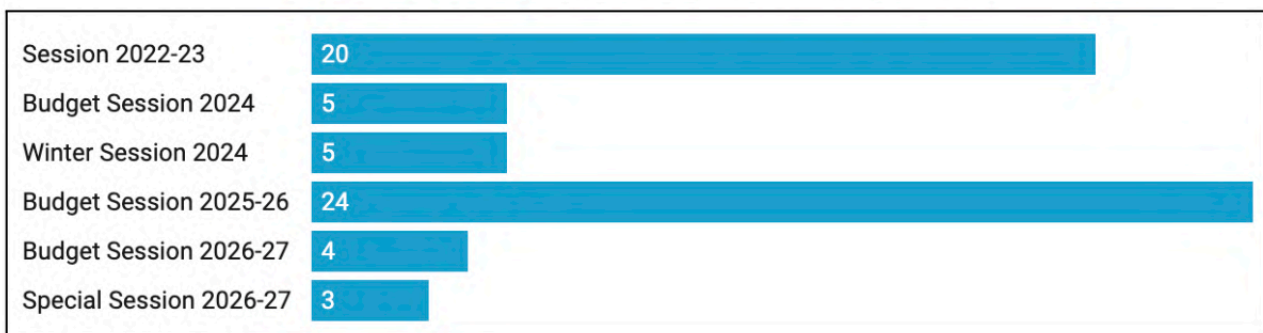


Figure: Session-wise Bills Passed in 16th Vidhan Sabha

Vidhan Sabha also introduced two ordinances: Punjab Law Officers (Engagement) Amendment Ordinance (later replaced by a bill) and Punjab Regulation of Crusher Units, and Stockists and Retailers Amendment.

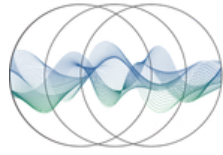
The 16th Assembly's early legislative activity was concentrated in *fiscal stabilisation* with bills introduced for FRBM amendments, GST alignments, and governance restructuring including the repeal of the State Vigilance Commission.

Legislative activity during 2024 and 2025 reflected a shift. Two significant bills, the Panchayati Raj Amendment Bill targeting rotation of reserved panchayat seats, and the Punjab Agricultural Produce Markets Bill seeking to replace nominated market committees with an administrator, remain unpassed during the review period. In 2025, the Assembly saw its highest volume of bill introductions but a substantially lower passage rate, with multiple bills relating to land, service delivery, and infrastructure stalling, including the Land Revenue Amendment Bill, which sought to digitise land records and limit litigant summons, and the Seed (Punjab Amendment) Bill, introducing criminal provisions for substandard seed supply remaining unpassed. Bills related to *educational institutions*, by contrast, cleared without friction.

An important procedural development occurred in July 2025 when the Assembly unanimously referred the Punjab Prevention of Offences against Sacred Religious Scriptures Bill, 2025 to a Select Committee. This appears to have been the first referral of a bill to a Select Committee in approximately a decade based on publicly available Assembly records reviewed for this study. Following committee consideration, the legislation was subsequently passed as Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar Amendment Act during the Special Session held on 13 April 2026 and later received gubernatorial assent.

The 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha's four-year record is an indicator of democratic energy. The findings highlight broader questions concerning legislative capacity and the changing character of democratic deliberations. Contemporary governance increasingly requires legislatures to engage with policy challenges that are more technical and administratively complex than ever before. Enhanced access to *non-partisan legislative research, stronger committee systems, improved information infrastructure, and expanded policy-analysis capabilities* can significantly strengthen the effectiveness of the Assembly. These systems will not only transform the outlook of Punjab's Vidhan Sabha, but also make it a torchbearer in advancing the '*quality of engagement*'. Ultimately, the long-term strength of a legislature is measured by its capacity to serve as an enduring institution of informed debate.

PANJ Foundation is a sub-national policy research organisation based out of Punjab, India. Established in February 2024, PANJ operates as an independent organisation, providing research-based, evidence-backed inputs and consultations to ensure socio-economic growth of Punjab. PANJ works as a collaborative front for initiating institutional and policy reform in the state of Punjab focused on enhancing ease of living. We use our connection and familiarity with the lands of Punjab to inform reforms that ensure greatest benefits for its citizens. www.panj.org.in | info@panj.org.in



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